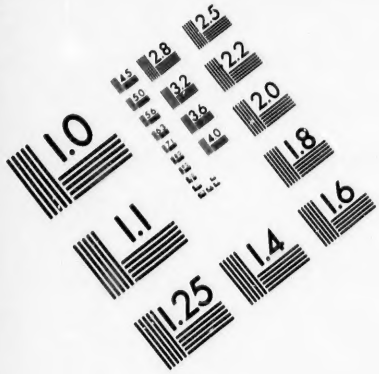

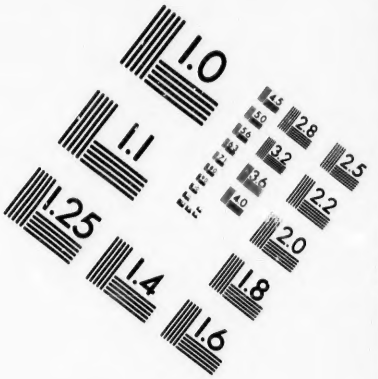

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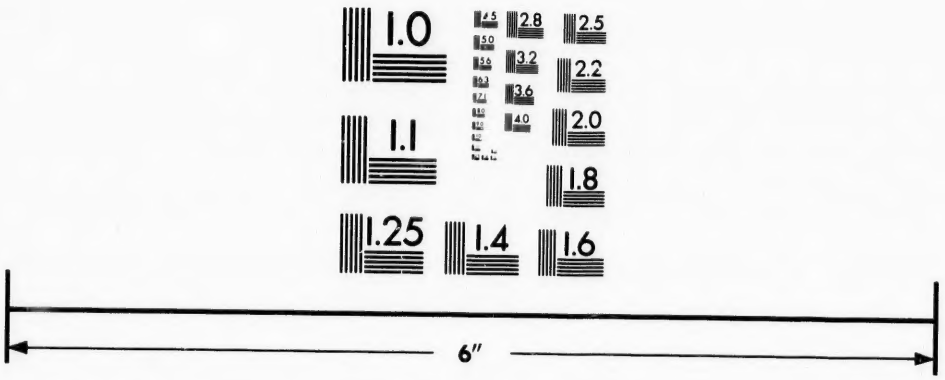

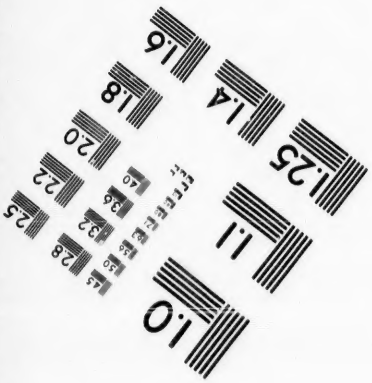

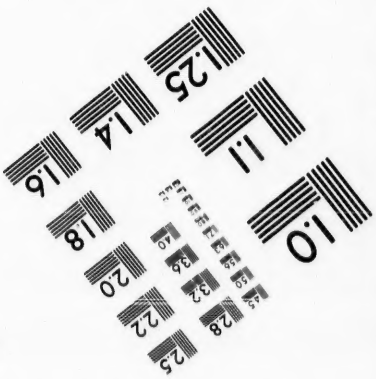

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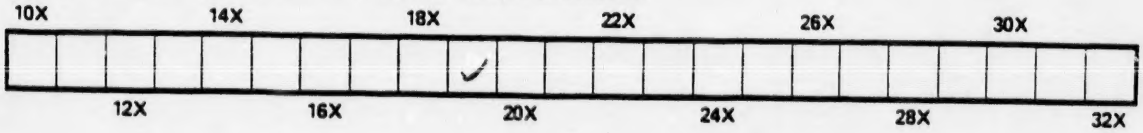

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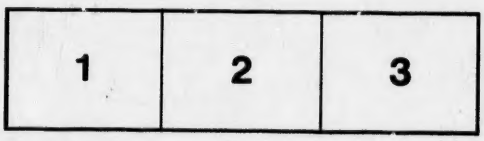

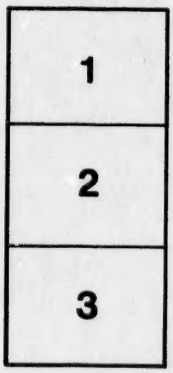

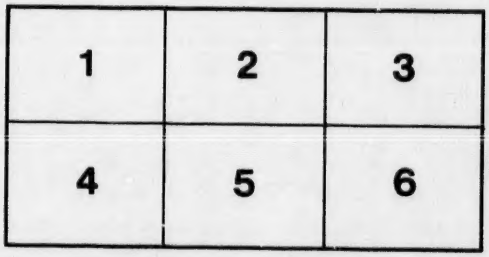

REPORT

OF

THE COMMITTEE

ON MINISTERS' STIPENDS.

Ordered by the Synod to be printed for the use of the Members.

THE Committee on Ministers' Stipends regret that they have not been able to come to any very satisfactory termination of their labours. Shortly after the last meeting of the Synod, the Committee met at Quebec, and prepared and issued circulars requesting every minister to give such information as appeared necessary to a correct view of the state of the Church in respect of the support of Ministers, and also to offer such suggestions as seemed likely to remedy existing evils in this matter. To these circulars only about twenty answers have yet been returned—so few that the Committee have judged it unnecessary, in the meantime, to arrange or detail the information they contain. The most important of them are those from Mr. M'Killican, Mr. M'Alister, Mr. Gordon, and Mr. Gale; and the suggestions contained in them will be afterwards adverted to in this Report. It is to be regretted that so few answers have been received. It would be comfortable

to believe this a proof that no very great evils exist in the matter submitted to the consideration of the Committee. But this, the Committee are well aware, is not the case; and the silence of so many ministers can be accounted for on other grounds. No doubt to many the information required might seem of too private and personal a nature, and easily capable of being used in a manner that would be injudicious and offensive. No doubt, to many it would appear that the exertions of the Committee were unlikely to be attended with much advantage. Add to these considerations, the very general inattention and indifference in respect of the orders of the Synod, manifested by its members; and it is easy to account for the imperfect returns which have been received. These returns the Committee will hand over to their successors: and they trust that by further enquiry, complete information may yet be obtained.

In the meantime, the Committee submit the following observations.

It is, in their judgment, in the highest degree desirable that the Synod, and every individual minister, should distinctly keep in view, how and whence it is that the support of ministers in this Church is to be obtained. It is by the working of the voluntary principle—understanding that expression in its correct sense. It is from the voluntary liberality of the people. Whether it were better otherwise, is a different matter. Such *is* the case, and it is necessary to keep it steadily in mind.

Among the manifold evils which proceeded from the protracted discussions of the Clergy Reserve question, it was not the least, that the prospect of a successful settlement of it held up to many a delusive expectation of such

public endowment as would, to a great extent, free the ministers of this Church from dependence on the liberality of the people. Such expectation, now that a settlement has been made, no reasonable man can for a moment entertain. However important, in the meantime, the aid which is now derived from the Reserves, it is manifest that these Reserves will never avail the Church to an extent that is at all worth considering in devising and laying down any general plan of action in respect of the support of ministers. On the contrary, it would be the better and safer course, while doing so, to leave them entirely out of view, and to consider only what must mainly be relied on —the voluntary liberality of the people.

Again, the Committee would observe, that among the many advantages which have resulted from our connexion with the Mother Church in Scotland, this has been one disadvantage, that ministers and congregations have been disposed to look to her for a degree of support which she cannot give, or which at least is not to be expected from her. It is in the highest degree desirable that dependence on this source of support should also be discarded from our minds. The funds of the General Assembly's Colonial Committee are but small: the field of their application is immense; and though it is possible that these funds might be increased by the proper exertion, it is scarcely to be expected that such exertion will be made. The labours of the Colonial Committee devolve mainly on a very few individuals, of eminent excellence and ability undoubtedly,—but who are not enabled by the Church to devote their whole time and talents to the laborious episcopate, so to speak, which is entrusted to them. On the contrary, they are all engrossed with their own profes-

sional duties; and the duties of the Colonial Committee are only attended to, and can only be attended to, in intervals of relaxation, and amidst the distraction of those unhappy questions which are now agitating the Church. It is not for the Synod to look to the Church in Scotland, any more than to the scanty public aid here, for the support of its ministers. It is, we repeat it, under God, to the people alone. It is on the working of the voluntary principle that we must depend—every increase to our numbers shutting us up more entirely to such dependence. And the question which the Synod has to consider (as the Committee think almost exclusively,) is, how that principle may be worked in the most wise, efficient, and Christian manner, such as shall be for the real good both of ministers and people.

And if this be the case, then certainly the Wesleyan system, for the support of ministers, deserves the special attention of the Synod, as a system which has been long in successful operation. To this system the Committee early turned their attention. It was pressed on their notice by Mr. Gale, and it was recommended by the announced intention of a large body in the Church of Scotland substantially to adopt it, in the event of unhappy circumstances rendering a reliance on voluntary liberality alone necessary. The system has, no doubt, many advantages. It makes every member of the Church contribute to the support of religious ordinances in the Church. It suits the income of ministers to their peculiar circumstances and necessities. It frees them from a dangerous and harrassing dependence on their particular congregations. It saves from much unpleasant feeling which a minister of principle and delicacy cannot but often have in pecuniary dealings

with his people ; and it enables every minister to instruct his flock in the duty of supporting the ordinances of the Gospel, without his lying open to the charge of doing so merely to increase his own income.

Notwithstanding all tthese advantages, the Committee are not prepared to recommend the Synod to attempt to adopt this system for the present. There are various difficulties in the way of such an attempt, all of which might perhaps be got over by degrees, and by prudent and necessary modifications of the system, except one ; that one, the Committee are constrained to state, is the small amount of authority actually possessed or exercised by the Synod over the ministers and members of the Church. To ensure to such a system as that under consideration, even a chance of success, the efficient and harmonious action of every Presbytery, and of every Session, would be requisite. But when has such efficiency or harmony of action been exemplified in the Church, in reference to any subject whatever? In behalf of Queen's College, for which it might have been anticipated that a universal movement would have been made, the Committee believe that two-thirds of the ministers and sessions have never yet stirred ; and this, notwithstanding the repeated admonitions, injunctions and remonstrances of the Synod. Were the Synod, after mature deliberation, to resolve on the establishment of a great general system, in its character like the Wesleyan, the Committee are persuaded that the result would be only a mortifying proof of its weakness, and that fewer ministers and congregations would be found giving a helping hand to the working of what would then be the authorized system of the Church, than have come forward to give answers to the queries of this Committee. If the Committee state

this matter too strongly, they throw themselves on the indulgence of the Synod. But they cannot doubt that the experience of the members of the Synod will amply attest the truth of what they say, and the reasonableness of the apprehensions which they entertain.

For the establishment in the Church, of a right and efficient system in respect of ministerial support, as, indeed, for the efficiency of the Synod in other matters of equal or greater moment, and for the possessing, securing and perpetuating the advantages of really Presbyterian church government, and saving us from falling into independent bodies scarcely united by any tie of government at all, it is essential that the Synod's influence be extended and its powers more felt. The Committee have no idea that any good could in this respect be done by a summary infliction of church censure: or that the influence of the Synod can be effectually or permanently extended, but by the growing worth of its members, and the more matured wisdom of its decisions and its plans. Still there is an influence to be derived from the administration of ecclesiastical funds, and the Committee think it should belong to the Synod, and that if the Synod possessed it, its decisions would be more regarded than they have hitherto been. The commencement of such a source of influence over the Church in general, by the supreme court of the Church, the Committee have in view in the scheme which they now propose to the Synod, and which, as being but one part of the Wesleyan system, and not of necessity disturbing presently existing arrangements for the support of ministers, it may be presumed, will be more readily acquiesced in and carried out, by both ministers and people.

It is that henceforth every individual admitted into full communion with the Church, shall be required to subject himself to a rule of the Church, to give annually a certain sum, say for example, one dollar, towards the support and extension of the Church; and that this should be inflexibly adhered to, except in such cases as it should appear to a Session to be a hardship to which the individual complaining should not be subjected; that all who are now in full communion with the Church be seriously, if necessary, individually dealt with, by their ministers and elders, voluntarily to subject themselves to this rule—the sum fixed being of course the minimum—and care being taken to impress on the minds of those whom God has blessed with abundance of the good things of this world, to give with greater liberality; that the fund so raised be transmitted to a treasurer to be named by the Synod, and administered by a Committee of Synod at the annual meeting of Synod—the said Committee to consist half of ministers, and half of elders—and that the fund be administered for two purposes:—1st, Aiding poor congregations in support of their ministers, whenever a satisfactory case is made out to the Committee, yet so as that no minister's stipend shall be raised from this fund above £100, or £120 a-year: 2nd, Employing readers, catechists or missionaries in destitute localities. A printed account of the administration of the whole to be annually circulated with the Synod's minutes. The Committee are convinced that if ministers and sessions did cordially and steadily exert themselves in its behalf, this plan might be carried into complete execution, and the sum named be raised from almost every communicant. There are, say sixteen thousand communicants of our Church in this Province. One dollar annually from each,

—less than is paid by every member of the Wesleyan Societies, as indispensable to their being members—would yield £4000; a larger sum than has ever been at the disposal of the General Assembly's Colonial Committee, by which fifty pounds a-year might be granted to each of forty poor congregations, and one hundred a-year to each of twenty missionaries. On the cordial and active exertion of ministers and sessions, the Committee cannot say that they calculate with much of certainty or hopefulness of the success of the scheme; if such cordial and active exertions are made, they entertain no doubt. Among the Wesleyan Methodists the thing is done, and they are not a wealthier body than the Presbyterians. Nor till it is tried, should it be presumed that the latter would fail to manifest equal willingness to maintain and extend the ordinances of the gospel.

Of the direct advantages of such a fund it is needless to speak. These are sufficiently obvious. Of the indirect advantage in the way of strengthening the influence of the Synod, it is not needful to say much; for that too is obvious. The possession of such a fund would forthwith enable the Synod to assume the place of a benefactor to those congregations and destitute localities. It would enable it to encourage congregations exerting themselves according to their ability; and to punish others refusing to do so. It would enable the Synod to relieve ministers from dependence on congregations who grudge them such support as they can give. And an advantage, by no means to be despised, would be the attendance on the meetings of the Synod, of ministers and elders who have hitherto been deterred, but would then be induced from the poverty of their congregations, to do so.

These advantages, great as they are, would not induce the Committee to propose the plan, were they not convinced that the projected rule, under such limitations as further consideration would suggest, is in itself righteous, and may and should be commended to the conscience of every communicant. Can he be accounted a Christian, or ought he to receive the Seals of the Covenant, who, being able, is unwilling to place so small a portion of his worldly substance at the disposal of the Church of which he is a member, for its support and extension? Need there be any hesitation in inflexibly requiring among others, this test, ever to be viewed, and ever to be spoken of, as the humblest and the least to be taken into account, of Christian discipleship. The Committee think not; and humbly submit the scheme, of which they have given an outline without entering into detail, to the serious consideration of the Synod, convinced, that if, as is perhaps the case, the Synod has not power to establish and secure the execution of this plan, it could never carry into practical accomplishment, a system of the same complete and complex nature, as the Wesleyan; and that if it does succeed in establishing this, it will lead the way to any other changes in the manner of raising support for ministers, which may afterwards appear desirable, and be productive of unspeakable good in the meantime.

Separate altogether from this scheme, and founding on such answers as have been received to the queries of the Committee, it would be no difficult task to make suggestions, which if adopted by the Synod, and duly attended to by ministers, sessions, and presbyteries, would materially diminish the evils at present existing, in respect of ministerial support. Ministers might be stirred up to greater

zeal in discharging their spiritual duties, and seeking the fruit of their labours in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers, satisfied that a temporal provision would follow ministerial usefulness. This is what Mr. M'Allister recommends, and it is a recommendation every way worthy of every minister's attention. Presbyteries might appoint individuals, laymen—the late Mr. Gardiner of Fergus, suggested,—to go through their bounds, and instruct people in a duty which delicacy will often prevent their ministers from dwelling on. Care might be taken by Presbyteries, not to settle ministers in circumstances, in which they will be harassed for want of such provision as is absolutely needful. Means should be devised to relieve from such circumstances, ministers who are placed in them, and placing them in other charges, to be supported for the time by the Synod. Rules might be laid down for insisting on frequent payments, and for organizing proper means to collect them. In all these respects little seems to be done. Much might be done. And were the Committee as fully persuaded that the regulations of the Synod would be promptly and conscientiously attended to, as that prudent and useful regulations might be laid down, they would on each of these points, urge the Synod to action, with greater earnestness and hopefulness, than they now feel warranted to do.

In conclusion, there is one point, which none of the answers given to the queries of the Committee suggest, but which the Committee do yet feel bound to bring under the notice of the Synod. This, is the necessity and duty of exercising the discipline of the Church in respect to this matter. Suppose the case of an individual solemnly pledging himself to give a certain sum for the support of

his minister, and at a fixed time—suppose this person quite able to fulfil his obligation, and yet neglecting or refusing to fulfil it—is it right to continue such a person in the full enjoyment of church privileges? Can it be a question whether an individual, known to the minister and trustees of a congregation to be without plea of necessity, guilty of a breach of a solemn obligation, should be admitted to the Lord's Table? Is the non-fulfilment of a contract not to be regarded as sinful and scandalous, if it be only made with a minister, or for the support of the ordinances of the gospel? Is moral principle to be sacrificed to a sensitive delicacy on this subject? Or can it be hoped that the blessing of God can rest on a minister and people, where many of the latter are thus guilty, and where the former is thus lax? The Committee know well that this is a view of the matter which many are not willing seriously to take. But they press it on the consideration of the Synod. And they have no hesitation in saying, that the strict and faithful exercise of the discipline of the Church in reference to such cases,—which, they are persuaded, are of frequent occurrence in most country congregations,—would be attended with beneficial effect, and would tend to raise the general standard of morals, in a matter, on which, of all others, it would seem at present, the obligations of truth and honesty are least regarded.

All which is humbly submitted.

JOHN COOK,

Convener.

QUEBEC, 4th July, 1842.

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